

# The City of Islam

by Marmaduke Pickthall

*What follows is a slightly edited speech that was delivered by Marmaduke Pickthall in Madras, India in 1927 and was entitled "The City of Islam"*

I have hitherto been speaking to you chiefly of the past and now in this concluding lecture, I wish to focus your attention mainly on the present. I have shown that the standard of Islam in every sphere of human action or human intercourse, is certainly not lower than the highest standards of today. It is Muslims who fall short of the Islamic standard today. I have explained the reasons (as I understand them) for the downfall of the Muslim Empire and decay of Muslim civilisation and I have told to how that downfall and decay, far from shaking the face of Muslims in the *Shari'ah* or Sacred Law, have strongly confirmed it. For they now see clearly that the cause of their humiliation has been neglect of some of the injunctions of the Sacred Law:

- **"To obtain education is a religious duty for every Muslim, male and female."**
- **"Seek knowledge even though it be in China."**
- **"An hour's contemplation and study of God's creation is worth a year of adoration."**
- **"Trust in God but tie your camel."**

and many other sensible and plain commands. Muslims now see clearly that the material success of western nations is due to their adoption of that part of the *Shari'ah* or Sacred Law of Islam which guards material progress and prosperity, and which the Muslims have so foolishly neglected. Ideas and axioms the most abhorrent to the mind of Christendom (I mean when the Christian church dictated the ideas and practices of the western people) but which were present in Islam from the beginning, and are embodied in the Sacred Law – have gradually one by one, become accepted by the people of the West. The duty of free thought and free inquiry; the duty of religious tolerance; the idea that conduct not creed or class distinction must be the test of a man's worth in law and social intercourse; woman's right to full equality with men before the law, her right to property; the license to divorce and remarry; the duty

of personal cleanliness; the prohibition of strong drink – all these well-known ingredients of the Sacred Law of Islam, which were all anathema [obscenities] to Christian in Europe. They are still regarded by the church as either irreligious or purely secular, that is, outside the purview of religion and have been incorporated in the ideology of western civilisation. It can be proved, and has been proved by Christian writers, that all these modern ideas were derived from the Muslims of a bygone day. But they were of course adopted by the Europeans on the strength of [*al-daleel al-aqli*] (the argument of reason alone), not on [*al-daleel al-shara'i*] (the argument of divine sanction); which alone commended them at first to Muslims. The Muslims, from belief in their divine sanction, proceeded to acknowledge the arguments of reason in favour of these ordinances. Is it possible that having accepted them on the evidence of reason that the West may come to eventually believe in their divine sanction? I hardly think so, until the West can recognise the divine sanction which is behind human reason Until the people come to know that all these things (which the Christians rank as 'secular,') are of such vast importance to the welfare of mankind, and form part and only part of an existing code of religious Law and claim to be of divine revelation. Until they come to realise their need for the remaining portion of the *Shari'ah*, the part which Muslims still hold firmly, the part which guards political and social stability and progress. This Muslims have held tenaciously on the strength of [*al-daleel al-shar'i*] only for the past two or three centuries; but [*al-daleel al-aqli*] alone can bring non-Muslims to adopt it, and [*al-daleel al-aqli*] today is lacking in the only form in which it could appeal to the materially-minded – a bright example of the whole Islamic polity [nation] and practice, upon modern lines.

We can show some notable achievements: the largest and most comprehensive human brotherhood the world has ever known, a society quite free from the internal strife and jealousy which threatens the existence of the western social order; a practicable code of international law; a social code in which the claims of capital and

labour, landlord and peasant, the rights of property and enterprise – nay, the very theories of monarchy, constitutionalism, socialism, communism, aristocracy and democracy – are all quite happily reconciled. Yet, while there is no bright example of Islam in practice, as a model of a successful and progressive modern state, and while the Muslim nations seem to be behind the western nations in material well-being, the latter will inevitably turn away with the idea that the guiding principles of such backward, unsuccessful people must of necessity be inferior to their own. And they have every right to do so, seeing what they see. The fault is ours, not theirs, if the light of Islam is invisible to them

Another thing which has confirmed the faith of thinking Muslims in the *Shari'ah* is the failure of western civilisation in the realm of political and social science. This is in contrast to its wonderful success in natural science and its utter failure so far to solve problems which were settled centuries ago in Islam. We all agree that it is desirable that the truths of Islam should be made known and as far as possible commended to the modern world. But some among the seemed to think that the weight to command them is to disregard the *Shar'iah* as something antiquated, and to present Islam as the religion without a Law – a mere matter of personal belief, of abstract thought and of detached opinion. Some Muslims, rendered stupid by the onslaught of modern technical efficiency, would be willing to accept not only the scientific knowledge and achievements of the West (which Muslims do most urgently require in order to complete the *Shari'ah*) which has been mutilated for too long, but also all the social and political ideals and institutions of the West. That is suicidal madness, as the Shahid Sa'id Halim Pasha warned the Muslims of the world in his remarkable work in Turkish, '*Islamlashmaq*'; for the political and social science of the West it is, unlike the natural science of the West, of haphazard growth and is based mainly not on demonstrable truths but on demonstrable fallacies. It is only the common sense of the English, their natural gift for making things unreasonable a success in practice and the mental energy and handiness their climate gives them which have enabled them to avoid a collapse, which has already come to other European countries – France (more than once), Russia, Italy. If the Muslims have declined through their neglect of certain portions of the *Shari'ah*, that is no reason for discarding the remaining portions, but rather for restoring the whole and observing it with more intelligence. We want a clear

code of the main principles and injunctions which can be placed in the hands of every Muslim and *Muslimah*. At present, in existing works on *Fiqh*, we are confronted with the manifest absurdity that personal matters, like the position in which a believer stands to pray, are made equally important with first principles, like the law forbidding murder. We have to distinguish once and for all between that which is essential and of permanent homage value and that which was the currency of a particular historical period. Otherwise most of us are likely to remain in the ignorant and bewildered state of men who cannot see the forest for the trees, who are so bothered with the emphasis on small particulars that they lose sight altogether of the motive and the goal. Muslims have everything to learn from Europe in the matter of natural science. They have nothing whatsoever to learn from Europe in the regions of political and social science. In such matters Islam found the way of peace thirteen centuries ago. Christendom has not yet found it. Therefore the work before us is not to discard Islamic institutions, putting western institutions in their place, but to modernize Islamic institutions and uplift them to the present standard of efficiency.

Prince Sa'id Halim, whom I knew well, was a man with a practical experience of statesmanship in troubled times and well versed in modern European politics. He was a reformer and the son of a reformer, who had been forced by circumstances all his life to give much thought to problems concerning the future of Islam and the Muslims. He was a man acquainted with the thought of England, France and Germany, as well as with the teaching of the Qur'an and of the Holy Prophet, and the commentaries of the learned on that teaching. He was thus well qualified to advise the Muslim world as to its future policy, and his advice was not *Auropalashmaq* (Europeanese) but *Islamlashmaq* (Islamese). He had in mind an independent Muslim country which still retained some of the press stage of the his direct Muslim Empire, and was still the seat of the *Khilafat*. He'd, like the great majority of members of the Committee of Union and Progress with the *Khilafatist*. So in his book his aim was, first and foremost, to depict the true Islamic state in modern times, and to contrast it with existing forms of government. Such considerations do not immediately concern the Indian Muslims so much as they did the Turks, but they are so interesting to us all that I shall give a brief account of them along with my own occasional comments, before proceeding to considerations which are of more immediate practical use to us in India and that are more directly connected

with my previous lectures.

Prince Sa'id Halim, in his task, had to overcome difficulties which we shall not have to face. For it is no easy business to translate the theory of Islamic government as it existed in the time of the first four *Khalifahs* into modern terminology. The first four *Khalifas*, even though they ruled a mighty empire and even though their armies and their officers, in all parts of the world, paid absolute obedience to their orders, had nothing in common with despots – least of all with military despots. They led a simple private life in Al-Medina, not interfering at all in the local government of the place, not interfering at all with any local government so long as it did right. Their words were absolute commands for all Muslims. But they issued very few commands, except to the armies and to the officers entrusted with the peaceful organisation of conquered religions. They gave plain accounts of events and of their own executive actions in the *khutba* every Friday in the Prophet's Mosque. They were the ultimate appeal in all religious matters, law and government, and that was all. They were not surrounded by the pomp of an imperial court. They claimed no royal reverence. Their private relations with the people of Medina and with all the Muslims who approached them were quite frank and brotherly. When a poor old woman rather rudely charged Umar ibn al Khattab with some slight wrong to her, the people wished to push her away, but the Khalifa ordered them to let her speak, saying: "It is a duty of every Muslim and every *Muslimah* to speak the truth to the ruler." All the Muslims who knew the Sacred Law obeyed it. If they were in doubt, they went to the *Khalifa* or his representative who solved their difficulties for them in the simplest way. There were no police, and no need of them. The liberties and the self governing institutions of the people were secured and the *Khalifa's* care was but to see that they enjoyed them.

A change came with the accession of Muawiyah but it was not so great as has been generally represented for the principle of election was still respected in theory. We find Muawiyah the Second on his deathbed expressly charging the people to elect the best among Muslims to succeed him – and the simplicity of the Arabs was still maintained to some extent. If Bani Umayyah had given proof of their sincerity by refusing the succession after Muawiyah's death (it must be remembered that they had a standing majority in Syria, Egypt, Northern Arabia and North Africa and so could do as they liked) and electing the best of Muslims (from the point of view of public

service) to succeed him, in the true Islamic way. There could be no two opinions today as to the service which they rendered to Islam, despite the crimes which marked their rise to power. But after making ruthless war on the dynastic party because of their desire to found a dynasty (against the Holy Prophet will, as Sunni's maintain) they themselves set up a dynasty, and thus defaced for us the outline of the perfect City of Islam. There have been dynasties of the *Khalifat* of Islam since then and only just now, the last inoffensive *Khalifa* of the illustrious the House of Osman was ordered out of Turkey at a moment's notice.

There have been many good Muslims in the long line of *Khalifas*, and Islam has often flourished under them with something of its pristine splendour, for the Shari'ah was always there to guide them in good government. But one of the limits of Allah imposed on personal ambition was transgressed when *elective* sovereignty for life was changed into *hereditary* sovereignty and one of the safeguards of the pure theocracy was set aside. If the elective life-sovereignty of a peculiar kind, in conjunction with free local institutions and self-government (which I shall come to later) had endured till now, had developed in accordance with the needs of the successive centuries, the task of restructuring the Islamic state along modern lines, it would have been comparatively simple – a question of reforms. As it is there is a mighty gulf to bridge, from now to then, and Sa'id Halim Pasha does his best to bridge it for us.

After this long digression, I now come to his ideas.

In the West today, the chief position in the state is open to two sorts of persons only: (i) the one who steps calmly into it by right of birth, whether equipped or unequipped to perform its duties, or (ii) the one who is elected to it by the public voice. There would be nothing to be said against the latter course, from our theocratic standpoint, if the election were made deliberately from among the best, tried servants of the nation by a council of the wisest heads. And if the term of election were for life or for so long as the elected person governed rightly. But it is made haphazard by the fallacy that the majority is always right, and the vote is given to a multitude incompetent to judge aright in such a case. The persons from whom the election is made are generally precisely those who in wisdom ought to be excluded altogether from the field of choice. That is, men who are personally ambitious, and who strain every nerve to rise to place and power. Among the early Muslims personal

ambition (the desire for power for its own sake) was an absolute disqualification. Lest you should think that this old Islamic ideal of giving power to man who, like our Holy Prophet, have no lust for power (the only man who really ought to be allowed to hold it) is altogether lost among the Muslims of today. Let me tell you that in the first great organised movement for the revival of Islam on modern lines, that ideal was religiously observed. In the Constitution of the Committee of Union and Programs it was laid down that personal ambition must be always in the servant's place. The chief executive power was entrusted to men who never came before the public and the chief ostensible power to men who, already before the public, were most indifferent to power and the most adverse to pomp and ceremony; first to the martyr Mahmud Shevket Pasha, and then to the martyr Sa'id Halim Pasha.

In the Muslim East today you will see that the dictators who have been elected are the men who have done greater service to the nation. Not men who have merely rushed a rival faction by the weight of an ephemeral majority. Contested election's form no part of Islamic institutions, for Islam has belief in the collective infallibility of those who are individually incompetent, and it has no faith in the majority of the ignorant. The choice of a ruler is a serious matter which is entrusted only to wisest heads acquainted with the personalities concerned. Muslims as a whole have no part in the election. They simply ratify the choice or they denounce it. The head of the Muslim state is not elected for a short-term only, but for life. He is invested with all the powers of government. In relation to the people, he is an absolute monarch, but in relation to the *Shari'ah* he is on a level with his poorest subject. He is merely a Muslim among Muslims, looking forward to the Day of Judgment when he will have to render an account of all his deeds. The people have no authority to get rid of him so long as he does right. But if he does wrong, the *Shari'ah* itself gives them the right to call him to account and, if need be, to depose him. In Western democracies, the people can vote to expel a President who has done right – nay, they can even expel him if he has done right and they prefer wrong. That would be quite impossible in the Islamic state, where there is a law for the ruler and for the people in such matters.

Islam recognises no inherent rights of man as man. Rights are attached to functions, duties properly performed, knowledge and experience. That is to say there is no political or social right apart from

competence. In the West, rights are recognised apart from competence. The most important rights of all, (i.e., the right to vote on public questions, the right to legislate and the right to rule) are conceded to the utterly incompetent. Questions of the most delicate national importance are decided by the rough and tumble method of majority rule. The minority is in the position of a defeated enemy. It has no rights whatsoever, although it may be composed of thoughtful men, as opposed to the majority, though it be composed of men intensely ignorant.

Majority and minority in that sense are unknown in the Islamic state. Here the popular assembly is not elected as in the West by constituencies which include all sorts of different interests, on the ground of party opinion; it is elected by constituencies composed of groups, such as trades, occupations, tribes and communities, which had essentially the same interests, on the ground of representative competence. Thus there is no opening for the tyrannising of majorities over minorities. And supposing that a majority holding a particular point of view did dominate the popular assembly, they could never tyrannise over the minority and their supporters throughout the country in the way in which majorities in power are wont to tyrannise in Europe – I mean, by legislation hostile to the minority's interests. Because in the Muslim state, the popular assembly has no legislative or executive function. The executive function is vested solely in the ruler of the state, who appoints his delegates, and is responsible only to the *Shari'ah* as represented by the council of the Jurists, in whom the legislative function is entirely vested. New laws are made only by men learned in the guiding principles of law, men chosen by the popular assembly from among the multitude of those learned in the law on account of their enlightenment and understanding of the nation's needs. And legislation is a rare thing, not a daily occurrence. The laws of Islam are not passed in a heated assembly by men who ardently desire the legislation in their interests, against men who just as ardently oppose it in their interests. The laws of Islam are firmly based upon the *Shari'ah* and are therefore in the interests of the people as a whole they are not the work of warring politicians but of sober jurists. And they are not concerned with small matters of detail. The smaller matters, which in Europe go to Parliament, are here regulated by an order of the executive.

We have seen revolutions in Europe. The result in the oppression of one sort of people by another, the only

change being that is a different sort of people who play the part of the oppressors after the revolution from which played that part before. That is because the name of one class of political party is not to enjoy equal rights with another, but to replace and crush the other inheriting all its privileges, including that of tyrannising. The goal that is pointed out by social and political textbooks of modern European history is that of unchecked ambition and that of irresponsible wealth and irresponsible power. In the same manner, we see nations seeking to ruin and destroy or to enslave each other. That is because the social and political order in Christendom is [*badin sultan*] (without divine authority). It is behind an authority which all men recognise. There is no general acknowledgement of the higher authority, a higher law than those which man's ambition and brute force are able to establish temporarily. Generally there are no respected limits except those imposed by force of circumstances. Therefore there are no real safeguards for the social and political regime. Nor can there be, where folk are ignorant of the divine and natural laws on which the social and political structure must be based in order to acquire stability.

Europe was more advanced in this respect under the pre-Christian Roman Empire than it has ever been since Christianity prevailed, because the pagan Romans were concerned with this world, and the Church was not. The Romans cultivated some humanity and did not allow the doctrine of irresponsible power to go unchallenged practically, as the Church has done. They had a high official called 'Tribunus Plebis' (The Tribune of the Common People) who had authority and often used it to call the government to account on behalf of the people – even on behalf of individuals. Something of the Roman tradition, revived in the Italian medieval republic, mixed with the free tradition of the younger races from the East which overran the Empire in the period of its decline. But more often than not it was opposed by the Christian church, which having taken to its heart the doctrine that the aim and object of religion is located in another world, far from establishing the ideal of God's actual Kingdom in this world (as Islam established it), often supported the doctrine of irresponsible power in this sphere which it regarded as 'secular.' The Christian Church punished men who like Savonarola, were bold and spoke of the Kingdom of God as actual. The greatest thing that the Church ever did, that I can remember, to restrain the irresponsible ambitions of the Christians was the institution of the *Treve Dieu* (the truths of God) causing warfare to be stopped on certain days of each

year. This reminds us of a similar institution among the Arabs during the time of Ignorance; and that it also forbade usury as strictly as Islam forbids it.

Do not misunderstand me. The Christian Church did much for the relief of misery and for the healing of the wounds of Europe. It preached peace, but it preached it at a distance from men's daily lives and always pointed to the cloister as the road to heaven. Thus it was remote from life and frowned on life, and added to which prevented it from exercising an effective check on the doctrine of irresponsible power, even when some saintly men arose who sought to do so. In general, the Medieval Church went with the times, and thus, more often than not, supported the doctrine of irresponsible power. It was the son of the Church in a special sense, a natural son of Pope Alexander, Cesare Borgia, who became, curiously enough, the pattern of the Irresponsables. This Cesare of Caesar Borgia was the greatest tyrant of his time. He was absolutely ruthless, but efficient. During his ruthless pacification of the Abruzzi, part of the states of the church, he happened to be accompanied for some time by an emissary of the Florentine Republic, one Niccolo Machiavelli who, disgusted with the disorders which prevailed in his own free republic, was so struck by the success of the fire-and-sword methods which he saw employed by Cesare that he beheld in other ruthlessness the best weapon of government. Cesare is in fact the hero of Machiavelli's famous book '*Il Principe*' (the Prince) which afterwards became the textbook of the state government for modern Europe – not only for despotic governments but for democratic governments as well. The late Mr. Gladstone, reputed as the great democrat and a religious man, accepts Machiavelli's "*Prince*" as his pattern in politics no less than does Frederick William of Prussia, or Catherine the Great. "*The Prince*" is the direct negation of theocracy, for it acknowledges no power above the might of human government.

Similarly, there has been no steadfast ideal as a guide for social conduct and relations, the Christian church upholding an ideal remote from actual life. Wealth and property have been, and are hallowed and administered without the limitations which a practical theocracy imposes. Generally, the downtrodden, who are envious of the privileges which the rich enjoy, aim at attaining such wealth and privilege themselves rather than adjusting the balance. Thus there is no equilibrium and the philosophical politician, to soothe his conscience, talks about the swaying of the pendulum, as if it were a

regulated movement of a necessary part of a machine. Whereas it is the machine itself, the very structure of society, that is swaying dangerously to and fro.

As for the balance of power, the famous European equilibrium, so often vaunted in Victorian days, is altogether gone now and Central Europe lies in ruins. Is there anything at all in this for anyone to copy, least of all for people who have stable institutions of their own, covering the whole ground of sociology and politics?

The terrific object-lesson of the last war [WWI] has led some thinkers to predict that Western culture may destroy itself within the century by mere persistence in a course which has been proved disastrous. That the danger is realised by many people in Europe may be seen from the attempts to obviate it both before and after the war, by first founding a Hague Convention then a League of Nations, and from the Labour Bureaux and Conciliation Boards which have sprung up so suddenly in every Western country. But the League of Nations and the Hague tribunal are incapable of dealing effectively with the big sinners. They can only bring to book the sinners who are small and weak. Nothing really useful can be done without a complete change of ideal, without recognition of a Higher Power and Authority than any which is founded on brute force. As a witty Frenchman once remarked: "*Si dieu n'existait pas il faudrait bien l'inventer* (If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent Him.) Western statesmen may have no belief in God, but they will have to act as if they believed in Him; they will have to accept the principles of Theocracy (the notion of a Higher Law than man's ambition, the unpalatable notion of the Day of Judgment) if they wish to rescue Europe and the world from a condition of perpetual danger.

In the social and political structure of Islam there is an Authority which all must recognise. Behind every one of its institutions and ordinances, there is a sanction which all must reverence. Real limits are imposed to men's ambitions and devices – [*hudud-Allah*] (the limits of Allah), as they are called, are boundaries which every Muslim must respect. And he must admit himself to be in the wrong if he transgresses any one of them. These are the safeguards of the rights of men and nations. In the Islamic polity there are no such ideas as irresponsible power, or irresponsible wealth, or irresponsible government, or irresponsibility of any kind. Power and wealth are limited by man's admitted and accepted responsibility to Allah, and the manner of

their use is prescribed in the Sacred Law. There are limits in commercial dealings, i.e., the respect for contracts and a man's pledged word, and the prohibition of usury and gambling. In private dealings there are limits, and on individual conduct such as the prohibition of intoxicants, the laws concerning kind and equitable treatment of women, justice to servants, charity to poor relations and the strict law governing inheritance: No testament to the detriment of heirs is lawful. There are very salutary limits to the relations of capital and labour or employer and employee. **"Wealth properly employed,"** said the Prophet (may God bless and keep him!). That is, wealth spanned in strict accordance with the *Shari'ah* "is a blessing to the world at large, and a person may lawfully endeavour to increase it by honourable means." (i.e., if not by usury for any kind of oppression.)

**"A tax must be taken from the rich and distributed among the poor."**

**"He is no true Muslim whom eateth his fill, and leaveth his neighbour hungry."**

**"Pay the labourer his wage before his sweat drieth."**

There are limits imposed on warfare, such as respect for treaties, the order not to destroy the enemies means of subsistence, respect for non-combatants, the order to show mercy to the surrendered enemy, and so on, as I have already shown. There are limits imposed on diplomacy, and on every form of national aggression:

**"He is not one of us who sides with his tribe in oppression, nor is the one of us calls others to assist him in injustice nor is he one of us who dies while assisting his tribe in tyranny."**

That was a limit which resulted in the total disappearance of aggressive nationalism in all the countries which profess Islam. You may think it odd that I should say this at a time when nationalism appears to be rampant in the Muslim world, when we read of Turkish nationalism, Egyptian nationalism, Syrian nationalism, Mesopotamian nationalism. The nationalism to be found in Muslim lands today is all defensive or protective as against European aggressive nationalism – or imperialism, which is merely aggressive nationalism fully grown – not against other Islamic nationalism. Indeed it is marked by a new warmth of Muslim brotherhood. This abolition of aggressive nationalism with the brotherhood

of every race and class and labour in the body of Islam, is perhaps the greatest actual achievement we can show today, when the limits are no longer perfectly observed when the bulwarks of the theocracy are in places broken down, though not irreparably.

It was those limits which preserved Islamic civilisation intact through through revolutions such as marked the rise and fall of Bani Umayyah and the passing of the Khilafat from one great Muslim racial group to another; through catastrophes like the invasion of Ghengis Khan even to the present day. For it is still essentially intact. Make no mistake about that. The *Shari'ah* is still the Sacred Law for all the nations who profess Islam. The Turks, in their reforms, appeal to it and every step, and the reactionaries here appeal to it when opposing all reforms. The so-called Muslim Bolsheviks of Russia claim no more for Bolshevism than that, as they conceive and experience it. It is not against the *Shari'ah*. The aim of every Muslim is to restore the *Shari'ah* to its pristine purity and translated into terms of modern life. We differ only as to details of interpretation and the methods which should be employed.

It was those limits (though occasionally far from perfectly observed) which cost millions of Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians to be tolerated, protected and often honoured in the Muslim empire through all the centuries when Europe thought it a religious duty to destroy non-Christians. It was those limits which made the Turks, when fighting for the bare existence of their country at Gallipoli, refuse to use the poison gas that the Germans offered them. It is those limits which have kept before the Muslims, even under the most despotic governments, the ideal of universal human brotherhood. And have preserved the Muslim polity from the evils of aristocracy, plutocracy and democracy, while refusing aristocratic virtues and democratic freedoms of intercourse throughout the whole community.

It is wonderful that we Muslims still believe and believe more firmly than ever, in our theocratic institutions. And that we see in them the way of escape from the perilous social and political confusion and uncertainty which coexists with material well-being in the modern civilisation of the West. The only way to get rid of the hatred between classes and nations and to soften the clash of diverse aims and traditions is by bringing the monarchist, the constitutionalist, the socialist, the

syndicalist and the communist into the same world of ideas. in other words, to save modern civilisation (which after all belongs to all of us, as being the highest civilisation of the age in which we live) from destruction from within which plainly threatens it. In Islam it is not greatly important whether the government is an elected sovereignty for life, or a hereditary sovereignty, despotic or constitutional, or a republic, or even a Soviet republic, provided that the *Shari'ah* remains supreme.

The principal points of Prince Sa'id Halim's presentment of the modern Islamic state may thus be summarised as the distinction between the secular and the religious in matters of administration, education, policy and general dealing, which has no right whatsoever to exist in the Islamic state. Where God is King, the secular becomes religious. All that would remain would be persons specially knowledgeable in matters of religion. Reverence would be paid to persons entirely because of their knowledge which has been displayed by actual works. And from among their number, the members of the Legislative body would be elected by the people's representatives. In short, the first thing to be done is to get rid of altogether that "pseudo-priesthood" to which Sa'id Halim refers to as the Chief Misleader of the Muslim World.

The state itself, having been "Islamised" and organised upon the lines I have already indicated, and having the advice of experts in Islamic ethics, politics and sociology, (who alone possess the right due to their competence) to frame new laws, will proceed on lines consistent with the basic principles of *Shari'ah* such as:

- Equality of all individuals, male and female before the law.
- Universal education for both males and females.
- Absolute religious tolerance.
- Prohibition of usury (which means that it is unlawful for any Muslim to derive or seek to derive profit from the misfortune of a fellow man.) Thus in the Islamic state, measures would be taken to stop profiteering in the necessities of life, as well as usury properly called.
- Prohibition of the sale of alcoholic drink.
- Prohibition of gambling.
- The institutions of *Zakat* and the *Bait-ul-Mal* [government treasury] which secure a fair distribution of wealth throughout the community.
- Respect for the rights of property within the limits laid down by the Sacred Law.

- The Sanctity of all contracts.
- The institution of marriage as a civil contract between free individuals, with facilities for divorce and remarriage, which is without undue publicity or the need for any scandal, allow to men and women in such matters the utmost liberty compatible with decency, with the welfare of both sexes with the rights of children.
- The maintenance of the decent reserve between the sexes, for the safety of women.
- The Islamic Law of the inheritance which prevents undue accumulation of wealth by individuals and secures a portion of it to the women of a family.
- Respect for women's persons, property and rights.
- Respect for the rights of children, particularly orphans, and recognition of the state's responsibility towards them.
- Universal military training as distinct from conscription.
- The Islamic regulations concerning foreign policy. The sanctity of treaties, prohibition of aggressive nationalism and aggressive warfare. Strict observance of the Islamic laws of war (if war unhappily should be forced on the Islamic state by the aggression of others); respect for all noncombatants and for the means of livelihood of the enemy; the use of no weapon which has not already been used against the Muslims by the enemy; mercy and forgiveness to the conquered.

I think that is what may be truly described as an 'advanced' program for any modern state.

I have been led by my interest in Prince Sa'id Halim's speculations to dwell perhaps too long upon an aspect of the question which is hardly presented to us for solution. Here in India we are not concerned with reconstituting the Islamic Sovereign state (which was Prince Sa'id Halim's most pressing concern) but with restoring a sadly decayed Muslim community living together with other communities under a system of government which allows plenty of scope for such a restoration and revival. Here we are not concerned with the manner of the election of the ruler, with the constitution of the national assembly and the Council of the *Ulama*, but rather with the great basic principles of the *Shari'ah* and with those local institutions which have existed almost unimpaired in Muslim countries from the time of the first rightly-guided *Khalifas* until now – though they have not existed unimpaired in India.

My casual reading of Indian history leaves me even to doubt whether true Islamic institutions have ever existed in India at all. But they exist elsewhere and are quite easily re-traceable.

The first thing that you have to do is to remove the curse of ignorance, which is the root cause of all the degradation of the Muslims at present. Islam does not admit of ignorance and where ignorance prevails Islam does not.

It is not a religion of superstition and priest-craft which, fungus-like, can thrive in darkness and in foul surroundings. It is the religion of free air and daylight, the religion of the truth of God's creation. Islam, as planted in the world, needs all available light and knowledge for its growth. We have to secure, for every Muslim man and woman, access to all the available light and knowledge of the present day. Education must be universal, and it must be a Muslim education. It must not treat all practical and material knowledge as 'secular' and apart from religion, but it must do as it did with the Muslim universities of old and make all learning religious. It must give to all learning "a place in the mosque." There is nothing in present day science that Muslims need be afraid of. It is in fact the outcome and continuation of the science of the Muslims in the great days of Islamic culture. It is not against the proper teaching of Islam but it is included in it. Your village mosques should be your religious schools and your great mosques in cities should be your universities.

Let the instruction given be as modern as you please, is still comes within the scope of *Al-Islam*, if Muslims would but wake-up to the perception of that fact. In the mosque, according to ancient practice, anyone may give a course of lectures who is competent to teach the subject, and we have many educated man in the country who cannot practise a more global or more truly Muslim form of charity than this of bringing knowledge to the ignorant. The first Islamic duty is to dispel the cloud of ignorance which dulls the intellect of so many of our brethren and harbours so much evil for Islam and India.

The revival of Islamic science, art and literature, will follow on the liberation of men's minds. I need not speak about it separately, for it has no separate importance.

Never forget that Muslims are brothers, and that the



ordinances of our religion (I mean our religion as the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet entrusted it to our keeping, not as it is represented by some folks today) are meant to bind together and preserve that brotherhood. Do not be led astray by anything or anyone who regards those ordinances as meaningless or out of date. They are only meaningless if the brotherhood of Islam has become a dead message. And they are not out-of-date since the need of universal human brotherhood, with a code of rules to guard it, was never more apparent than it is today. The five daily prayers, the pilgrimage, the fast of Ramadan, quite apart from their benefit to the individual worshipper, are witnesses to the brotherhood of all nations and languages and classes and castes.

If you really wish to restore the Islamic community and give it vigorous growth, you must absolutely re-establish the collection and distribution of [*zakat*] (charity tax) and must confide to the wisest and most upright man in every town and district – who would use it, as it should be used, to discourage idleness and begging and vice, and to foster the ideal of honest independence in our poorer brethren.

Avoid even the shadow of usury in all transactions between Muslims. I am aware that financial and commercial systems of the present day differ materially from those of the past. The Holy Qur'an allows trade but forbids usury. Now usury means taking an unfair advantage of a brother's need, and trade means supplying a brother with that which he requires at a just price. That undoubtedly is the Quranic meaning of the terms. I think myself that much of modern commerce does not fall under Quranic "trade" at all. And I know that many Muslims hold that certain kinds of loans for interest, usual nowadays, are not usurious because they do not injure any fellow men. It may be so, but from the point of view of human brotherhood all such transactions are undesirable. The general social influence of the present system is upon the whole against fraternity. Why is it that the abolition of interest is in the forefront of every socialist program? Why was it that when communism came to power in Russia, the first thing that it did was abolish interest and the whole system which admits it? It is because the capitalist order of society (already threatened with destruction everywhere in Europe after barely a century of existence) is based on usury, and because that in the opinion of the thinkers opposed to it, is the reason why it produces so much social injustice.

Therefore, for the sake of our fraternity I say: Avoid even the shadow of usury in transactions between Muslims. If this shadow must fall on us, let it be only in transactions with other communities with whom usury is an established institution and then let it be only what is absolutely necessary for the discharge of ordinary business. If Muslims must not receive interest neither should they pay interest. Therefore they must not borrow from people of other communities, and the proper Muslim organisation must be re-established for helping them at times of real need. The same organisation would serve to discourage loans for purposes of senseless ostentation or extravagance, and so check one of the chief causes of the economic weakness of the Indian Muslims. For improving the economic status of the community and at the same time safeguarding our Islamic brotherhood (the two aims would be incompatible if we blindly followed European methods) you will find everything that you require in the old Islamic system of finance, and I advise you to strongly devote some study to it.

- Enforce the prohibition of strong drink and gambling with all the weight of your social and personal influence.
- Be strict in observance of the Islamic Law of inheritance.
- Wage war on ignorance, keep to your Islamic duties. Re-establish regular payment of [*zakat*] (charity tax), restore the *bait-ul-mal* and you will soon have a decent, prosperous, advanced and well-organised community instead of the mere rabble which we see at present.

I have spoken to you of the charge of fatalism as a charge unjustly brought against Islam. It is unjustly brought against Islam, but not unjustly brought against large numbers of the Muslims. In the ignorant masses there is found a blind and stupid fatalism, simply because they are ignorant and know little or nothing of Islam. It comes from the mistaken notion of *jihad* (the effort of every Muslim is obliged to make) as limited to war against unbelievers. Whereas war against unbelievers is nowhere enjoined. But war against evil; war against aggressive wrong; war on behalf of right; war against idleness and sloth and lethargy and dirt and ignorance is everywhere enjoined. And in every vocation of life -- even in a man's own home and even in a man's own soul -- *jihad* is the whole life of the true Muslim. And when his whole life is illuminated and ennobled by the spirit of *jihad*, then indeed he has a right to be a fatalist to this

extent: that, aware that he is doing his duty with all his might at all times, he has no care for anything that may befall him, he trusts the word of Allah:

*“There shall no fear, upon them, neither shall they grieve.”*[Qur’an 2:112]

If Islam is to be commended to the modern world, Muslims must display again the spirit of *jihad* in every walk of life. They must strive unceasingly for what they believe to be right against what they believe to be wrong, and so gain the respect which the Muslims of old gained. Their conduct and their conduct only can commend Islam and its institutions to all the people of the earth. We cannot adopt the institutions of any other people in place of our own, though we may after due consideration, adopt some institution in addition to our own. The Muslims must be organised as Muslims or they will lose the strength of their complete theocracy, which is the greatest contribution they have to offer to the modern world. There is nothing here in India to prevent them from organising themselves along Muslim lines and developing their own institutions to the highest point of strength and efficiency.

For organisation, the Muslims of all India might be represented by a council of the wisest heads in all matters which concern the whole community, such as Muslim education, and the coordination of the local efforts for revival and reform. And each group and district should have its own representative system upon Muslim lines. And here we come again not only to the Islamic state, but to the lower and internal parts of its machinery -- not the upper parts which Sa’id Halim Pasha reconstructed. In the Islamic State, the constituency is made as small as possible in order that all the constituents may be well acquainted with the representative whom they elect from among themselves. And it is composed of people of the same, not conflicting, opinions and interests, so that he may fairly represent them all. You may say that in that case, we should have innumerable members of Parliament. I am not talking of members of Parliament but of members of the lowest representative body, a council of trade or occupation in the town, and the village council in the country. Each of those lowest representative bodies elect a representative from among its members. And those elected representatives together form the city councillor the district council, which in turn elects from among its members a representative for a provincial council, and so on up to the popular Assembly, or

Council of State, as it was sometimes called.

This is quite different from a parliamentary system, but it has its manifest advantages. For instance, in each case the whole constituency is thoroughly competent to elect. And the men to be elected to the higher councils are only such as have proved their fitness for election, and have some experience. This is the old oriental system of self-government – the system of *shuyukh* or head men – consecrated by Islam. And, as far as I know, it has never failed to prove effective when allowed to operate with reasonable freedom in any Eastern land. It has the great advantage of affording honourable advancement to men of solid worth – men who have worked hard all their lives for public causes, without any of the clap trap of the demagogue. I recommend it to you as the proper system of representation for Muslims to adopt in their communal organisation.

I have told you very plainly what I think about the present general position of Muslim women in India. It must be improved. Education must be given to them in accordance with our holy Prophet’s own express command, and they must be given scope for the development of the much good which Allah has placed in them. They have the same right as men to full development and those who withhold that right from them are doing a great wrong.

Muslims cannot adopt the institutions of other communities, but it is their duty to respect the customs and institutions of other communities and to live with them on terms of neighbourly regard and tolerance. Intolerance and what is called ‘fanaticism’ have nothing to do with the religion of Islam. The Holy Qur’an and the example of the Holy Prophet forbid intolerance and even the least is courtesy to people of another faith.

Intolerance in professed Muslims can only come from ignorance of Islam. And the height of intolerance to be found in India only indicates the depth of ignorance to be found in India. We want the presence of the Muslim community to be an evident blessing to all the people of India, not a curse. So the need for education becomes more urgent. The horror and the shame of intolerance must have been brought home lately to everyone (as it was brought home most poignantly to me)– by the murder of a man whom I respected very highly. There is nothing in the teaching of Islam to justify hatred of any man for his opinions or for seeking to win others to his opinions.

God forbid that I should have to say it but there is nothing in the teaching of Islam to justify murder. Islam preaches equal justice to all men, tolerance for all sincere opinions, respect for all good men, wherever found. Islam is not against but for the rest of the world, striving for right against wrong wherever found. I would urge you most strongly to notice the need to preach and practice ceaselessly this virtue of Islamic tolerance. We are forbidden to upset the wine of a non-Muslim. We are forbidden to speak about anything in his religion which could hurt his feelings. The tolerance of Islam in history is our great claim to the consideration of the world. The tolerance of Islam and the future may heal the wounds of humanity. Let that tolerance be established, and if need be, and forced among you in the present. Here again is need for organisation and for discipline.

Many professed Muslims today speak exactly as the Jews and the Christians spoke in our Holy Prophet's time: as if none but members of their own community could enter paradise.

*“Verily, those who believe and those who keep the Jew’s religious rule, and Christians, and Sabaeans – whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day, and doeth right – surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they suffer grief.” [Qur’an 2:62]*

And again:

*“And they say: None entereth paradise except he be a Jew or a Christian. These are their own desires. Say: Bring your proof (of that which ye assert) if ye be truthful. [Qur’an 2:111]*

*“Nay, but whosoever surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing good (to men) surely no fear shall come upon them, and neither shall they grieve.” [Qur’an 2:112]*

THE END